

Open Space Plan

PREFACE



Grasslands carpeted with wildflowers, the cool shade of creekside cottonwoods, the play of sun and clouds across the foothills, the smell of a pine forest after a thunderstorm, rock forms etched in snow, hillsides of scrub oak bursting with fall colors -this is just a sampling of the natural beauty that residents and visitors can enjoy in Colorado Springs without ever leaving the city. This natural setting also provides abundant opportunities for outdoor activities, such as hiking, running, bird watching, bicycling, picnicking, rock climbing, and observing and interpreting nature. These experiences and activities are essential to the quality of life here.

Recently, the physical growth of the city has been mirrored by a growing community awareness that preserving the city's quality of life is in large measure dependent on the conservation of its natural setting, including the natural systems and processes that sustain it. With continuing expansion in building has come a sense of urgency that many of the area that make Colorado Springs a unique place that could be lost forever.

This concern for the natural landscape is not new in Colorado Springs. In fact, it has been expressed repeatedly by citizens and civic leaders since the city's earliest days. General William Jackson Palmer, Colorado Springs' founder, stated it eloquently in an address marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the city on 1896.

What lessons are suggested by this experience of 25 years? What could have been done differently to advantage? Many things, no doubt. For one, I think that with such a sunny, airy climate, the streets should have been narrower, and the land so saved put into more open space, apart from the thoroughfares.

The original design should have been adhered to and all the land from the Cascade Avenue and including the creek bottom kept as a park and laid out with paths, and grassed on the plateau as means afforded. Furthermore, at a time when it could have been done for a comparative trifle, the neighboring canyons, the Garden of the Gods, and Blair Athol should have been secured for parks and the entire mesa for a playground. Thus a population of 50,000, or indeed, any larger number, could never be deprived in their walks, rides, or sports of that glorious sense of being all out of doors, of the delight in not being fenced off, which was the principal charm of the plains in the days when this town was planted.

The Colorado Springs Open Space Plan is dedicated to continuing the spirit and legacy of conservation expressed by General Palmer over a hundred years ago. It is a systematic and logical plan for preserving the city's natural landscapes and retaining its quality of life for both present and future generations. This plan is presented to the citizens of Colorado Springs in the hope that, as they and their children and grandchildren enter the new millennium, they will "never be deprived... of that glorious sense of being all out of doors, of the delight in not being fenced off..."

How to Use the Plan

Within the overall intent of the plan to provide the community with a guide for conserving future open space areas in Colorado Springs, there are a number of more specific uses that the Plan may fulfill. Depending on the user, the plan may be utilized as a description of the current status of open space conservation in the city (as of 1996), as a reference for identifying broad natural areas, or as a plan for action. The following is a brief overview for individual users.

The What, Why, Who, and How of the Plan

Part One presents what open space is in Colorado Springs, why the Plan was undertaken, what its purpose is, and how it was completed.

The Current Status of Open Space in the City (1996)

Part Two surveys the existing public open space inventory and how it was assembled over the years. It presents the different types of open space to be found in the city, explains how they are related to the overall parkland inventory, and discusses the methods that have been used to conserve them.

The Future Open Space System

Part Three is the heart of the Plan. It brings together existing policies, new open space purposes, questionnaire responses from citizens, goals for the open space system, environmental analysis, and selection criteria to propose a city-wide open space system and to identify candidate areas for conservation. The broad natural area types within the city are described, and the application of geographic information system (GIS) technology to identify and evaluate potential open space areas is outlined. It concludes with a discussion of the opportunities for regional coordination of open space conservation.

Building the System

Part Four presents the general strategy and recommendations for implementing the plan. It addresses the participation of private landowners, developers, nonprofit land trusts, community groups, and city government in realizing the open space system over time.

Part 1: Introduction

Why Does Colorado Springs Need an Open Space Plan?

Colorado Springs is situated in one of the most spectacular natural settings along the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. Stretching out from the foot of Pikes Peak, the city encompasses forested foothills, sheer-walled canyons, mountain streams, unique rock formations, expansive grasslands, meandering creeks, and scenic bluffs and mesas. Stunning views of the "Peak" and the front range mountains can be enjoyed from almost every part of the city.

This natural setting is essential to the character and identity of Colorado Springs, to its sense of place, and to its quality of life. In addition to scenic beauty, the natural landscape provides residents with opportunities for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, running, and horseback riding, for picnics

and quiet contemplation, for environmental education, and for sensory relief from the stresses of city life. It preserves important habitats for wildlife and significant areas of native vegetation. It also serves as a major economic asset attracting tourists, as well as new residents and new businesses, to the city every year.

Until the 1950's, the city was able to maintain a balance between its growth and the quality of its natural setting. That balance was due in part to generous bequests and donations that set aside large natural areas such as Palmer Park, North Cheyenne Canyon, and the Garden of the Gods as public parks early in the century. It was also due in large measure to the area's gradual increase in population and the limited extent of the city boundaries.

After 1950, the city began to experience repeated waves of growth that have continued up to the present day. The result has been an accelerating population increase and the dramatic expansion of developed area. The city grew from fewer than 50,000 residents in 1950, to an estimated 323,300 in 1995. To accommodate these new residents and their attendant employers and services, parcel after parcel of vacant land has been developed into residential subdivisions, apartments, shopping centers, schools, churches and workplaces. The city's boundaries and the developed areas within them have increased several times over. During the same period, the amount of public open space per resident within the city has declined significantly.

The development of vacant lands and the conversion of the natural landscape are inevitable consequences of the City's ongoing growth and economic viability. Over the years, however, the effects of continuing development have raised concerns with how and where growth should take place, what the long-term impacts on the community's quality of life should be, and which lands should be conserved. Although the importance of protecting the city's natural areas has been recognized since its earliest days, the community as a whole has struggled to find the most effective way of accomplishing that objective. During the 1990's, many vacant areas with wide visibility and high scenic and natural value became subject to development pressures. As a result, the need to conserve open space re-emerged as a prominent community concern.

This community concern was first stated as a public policy in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, which recommended that "a City-wide open space plan which identifies unique features which should be considered for preservation" be developed. Then, in 1996, the City Council adopted the following goal:

"The City recognizes that the preservation and acquisition of open space is critical in maintaining the quality of life in this community. In 1996, the City should evaluate and pursue alternative means of providing for open space. An open space plan should be completed during 1996."

This plan represents the achievement of that City Council goal.

What is Open Space?

What is Open Space-

Each community defines open space in its own way. In Colorado Springs, open space has been officially defined in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and Zoning Code as follows:

Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan (1991)

(An) open space area is a parcel of land (publicly owned, maintained, or privately owned land for which park land credits have been granted), set aside to retain land, water, vegetative, historic and aesthetic features in their natural state. Open space may be characterized as:

A. Natural state, to be preserved in an undisturbed condition in perpetuity; or

B. Primarily natural, but which may be used for the location of easements and/or right-of-way for public improvements pursuant to Parks and Recreation Department policy.

City of Colorado Springs Zoning Code (1994)

Open Space: A parcel or area of land which is unimproved and which may be in public or private ownership and which may contain significant natural features such as a flood plain, steep topography or significant rock outcroppings. The term is intended to designate areas which warrant preservation.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan (1988)

Open Space Area: A parcel of public land, set aside to retain land, water, flora, fauna, historic and esthetic features in their natural state, scenic or open condition.

Although each definition differs somewhat in emphasis, the central ideas are consistent:

- * Open space areas are in a natural or primarily natural state;
- * Open space areas contain significant natural, aesthetic, or cultural features that warrant protection;
- * Open space is permanently protected, not a temporary designation for vacant lands.

These three criteria characterize open space in Colorado Springs. When they are applied to the city's total inventory of park lands, the importance of public open space to the city's parks system becomes apparent. Roughly 75% of the Parks and Recreation Department's total inventory of 8,495 acres within or adjacent to the city can be considered as public open space. Those open space areas include regional parks, such as Garden of the Gods and Palmer Park, community parks that are at least 50% in a natural state, various parcels designated as open space, and numerous trail corridors. Golf courses and cemeteries are not included as open space according to the official definitions given above.

Neighborhood parks and community parks that are developed with turf grass, playground equipment, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, swimming pools, or other types of recreational facilities or structures are also not counted as open space. Whereas the primary purpose of developed parks is active recreational use, open space areas in Colorado Springs are designed mainly to preserve the natural landscape. Certain types of recreation, such as hiking, running, bicycling and horseback riding, are ideally suited to many open space areas, but are accommodated only to the extent they are compatible with the protection of the natural environment. Amenities and recreational facilities in open space areas are typically limited to trails and supporting picnic areas, interpretive facilities, restrooms, and parking lots.

The Purpose of the Plan-

The purpose of the Open Space Plan is to provide the community with a guide for the future conservation of open space areas in and around the city. It is intended to be used as an information resource, a policy document, a vision of the future open space system, and as a road map for realizing that system.

- * As an information resource, the Plan maps the makeup of the city's current open space and its remaining natural areas.
- * As a policy document, it sets forth the purposes and functions that open space should serve in the community.
- * As a vision of a future open space system, it first identifies and evaluates potential open space areas, and then shows how they can be combined with existing open spaces to create a system of natural areas and greenways.

* Finally, as a road map for realizing that system, it sets forth recommendations on how to build, maintain, and manage that system over time.

How the Plan Was Created-

The Plan was created through the combined efforts of a sixteen-member Citizens Review Committee (CRC), a project team made up of planners and geographic information system specialists, and a technical team of representatives from various City departments, other local governments, and State and Federal agencies. Financial support was provided by a grant from the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund.

The CRC was composed of representatives of civic, professional, development, neighborhood and environmental groups. Overall, thirteen organizations were represented, plus three at-large members. From January through December of 1996, the CRC met at least once a month to guide, review and comment on the progress of the plan. All meetings were open to the public and provided a valuable venue for community participation and input.

The Technical Team coordinated the development of the plan among the various interested City departments, adjacent jurisdictions, interested state and federal agencies, and affected military installations. Technical Team members were also important sources of local expertise and background information on open space issues.

In addition to the CRC, there were many other opportunities for individual citizens to share their suggestions and concerns about open space. These included:

- * the distribution of 5,000 informational brochures and mail-back questionnaires;
- * the return of over 900 completed questionnaire responses;
- * repeated radio and newspaper announcements;
- * two open houses jointly sponsored by the City and County;
- * the printing and distribution of more than 650 copies of a draft plan for public review and comment;
- * numerous presentations to community groups and local organizations; and
- * public hearings before the City Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the City Council.

All suggestions and comments received were considered in the development of the plan.

The approach taken by the project team at the outset of the planning process was to build upon approved City plans, policies, and definitions that pertain to the preservation of open space and significant natural features. These were then supplemented by the CRC with a more specific set of community purposes and goals for open space. The Committee also reviewed and evaluated the resources and methods currently used by the City to preserve open space.

A second major building block in the plan was the decision to use geographic information system (GIS) technology for computerized mapping of existing and potential open space areas. This has resulted in the compilation of a valuable data base for future reference in open space conservation.

In summary, the plan has combined community input and citizen participation with extensive information gathering and technical analysis. The major steps in the process are illustrated to the right.

This plan will discuss each of these steps in turn. This introduction, as well as Part Two, are largely informational, giving the background necessary to support the plan's recommendations. Part Three is

an analysis of issues and concerns related to planning a future open space system. It also identifies areas that are top candidates for conservation. Part Four sets forth specific recommendations for building and implementing the future open space system.

Part 2: The Existing Open Space Inventory

Existing Open Space Inventory

City-owned Open Space

One of the first tasks in the open space planning process was to inventory existing public open space areas within the city that could be considered as the foundation of a future system. While open space can be either publicly or privately owned, most private open space serves primarily as an amenity to a specific development or subdivision, with little or no public access. For that reason, the existing open space inventory focuses on public lands with community-wide benefit. The map of the inventory presented below includes land that is:

1. In the public domain, owned either by the City of Colorado Springs or El Paso County;
2. Permanent open space, not subject to possible future development;
3. All or mostly in its natural state; and
4. Within or in proximity to Colorado Springs.

The majority of these areas are owned or managed by the Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Department. Of the city's complete parkland inventory of more than 8,495 acres, over 6,500 acres, or three-fourths, can be counted as open space. The parts of the Parks and Recreation inventory considered as open space have few or no recreational amenities other than trails, parking areas and possibly picnic areas and restrooms. They are characterized by a predominance of natural vegetation rather than turf.

Public open space areas fall into one of four park management categories: regional parks, community parks, open space, and trails. Some neighborhood parks that form critical links in linear trail corridors have also been included.

Regional parks are the largest in size, generally over 100 acres. Although most recreational uses are allowed in regional parks by definition, all have large expanses of undeveloped land and natural features that meet the definition of open space.

Community parks rank just below regional parks in size, typically ranging from 25 to 100 acres. Like regional parks, most recreational equipment and fields are allowed. Facilities such as baseball diamonds, soccer fields and playground equipment are much more likely to be found in community parks than in regional parks. Four of the eight existing community parks, those with at least 50% of their area in a natural state, are counted in the open space inventory.

The Parks and Recreation Department classifies open space for management purposes as parkland that is acquired strictly for preservation in a natural state. There are no specific size standards, other than providing an area sufficient for preservation of significant natural features. Currently, there are fourteen areas classified and managed as open space, ranging in size from two to 192 acres.

Existing trails and trail corridors provide continuous linkages between open space areas. Over 50 miles out of a total of 159 miles in the planned system have been completed so far. In many instances, trail corridors provide critical linear open space for both human and wildlife movement between natural areas.

Other City open space areas include neighborhood parks that serve as sections of trail corridors, and recently acquired parkland that has not yet been classified.

The first of the two maps on the preceding pages depicts the city's overall park land inventory, including golf courses and developed parks. The second map shows those portions of the park land inventory that consist of existing public open space areas in or adjacent to the city, together with existing and proposed trails and areas designated as future open space in approved master plans. Appendix 1 lists the areas in the City's existing open space inventory. The acreages given are derived from a combination of geographic information system mapping and Parks and Recreation Department records. They are the best figures currently available and may be subject to minor adjustments.

El Paso County Open Space

The County Parks Department owns or manages several trails and open space areas in and near Colorado Springs. The County's regional parks are well used by city and county residents alike, and contain many valuable and beautiful natural amenities. The nature centers at Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Regional Parks provide excellent environmental education programs focusing on native wildlife and vegetation. Two of the properties, Section 16 and Black Forest are secured with long-term leases, but are not yet permanently protected open space. See Appendix 1.

Other Adjacent Open Space Resources

United States Air Force Academy

The United States Air Force Academy, located on the city's northern and western edges, has 11,000 undeveloped acres that are open to the public. Because the Academy maintains an open base policy, visitors are able to access much of the installation for recreation. The mountain backdrop preserved by the Academy's grounds serves as an invaluable visual amenity for city residents. Likewise, the Academy land bordering both sides of Interstate 25 provides an attractive and important entry way to the city for motorists. The Academy property also features diverse vegetation and wildlife habitat, including some threatened, endangered or protected species. Nearly eight miles of the New Santa Fe Trail run through the Academy, much of it along or near the riparian habitat of Monument Creek. The Academy lands have long been thought of as permanent open space by city and county residents, but their future disposition is subject to decisions by the U.S. Congress and the Department of Defense.

Fort Carson

Fort Carson, a 137,000 acre U.S. Army installation on the city's southern boundary, has about 8,000 undeveloped or recreational acres. Because this land is periodically used for military training exercises, it is not open to the general public on a regular basis. However, Fort Carson is actively working with the City and County governments to allow the extension of recreational trails through the post and to create a new El Paso County regional park. The post's open space areas contain wetlands, streams and important wildlife habitat. Like the Air Force Academy, the disposition of Fort Carson land is determined by Congress and the Department of Defense.

National Forest

The Pike and San Isabel National Forests total over 2.2 million acres of public lands in 17 counties in central and southeastern Colorado. Of that total, the Pikes Peak Ranger District, located in Colorado Springs, has management responsibility for 240,000 acres. Most of the land managed by the District is located in El Paso and Teller Counties, with a small portion in southern Douglas County.

The United States Forest Service is an agency of the Department of Agriculture that manages National Forest System lands for multiple use purposes and protection of the forest resources. The agency summarizes its mission as: "Caring for the Land and Serving the People". Management of these lands is guided by the Pike and San Isabel National Forest Management Plan. Management activities are based on the objectives, guidelines, and standards identified in the plan for various areas. This plan is generally revised about every 8 to 10 years. The Forest Service is currently working on a Land

Ownership Adjustment Analysis that will identify public lands that the agency has an interest in disposing of or acquiring. Some minor changes in ownership could occur through donation, purchase, or exchange. However, these changes must be in the best interest of the public.

Private Open Space

Not all land that fits the definition of open space is publicly owned. Examples of privately owned open space exist throughout the city. Privately owned open space is almost always "development-specific," that is, it relates primarily to, or is exclusively a part of, the development within which it was created. It serves first and foremost as an amenity to the private development adjacent to it. As a result, existing private open space in Colorado Springs is often fragmented, piecemeal, and disconnected. Most private open space areas have no public access, and tend to have localized, rather than community-wide benefit. The few exceptions to this are those parcels protected by the Palmer Foundation, a local non-profit land trust.

For these reasons, private open space is considered as an asset that supplements the public open space inventory, but is not a part of it. Although some private open space areas provide large, contiguous tracts of environmentally and aesthetically significant land, the majority of private open space lies in smaller, more isolated parcels. Private open space has, however, been instrumental in preserving many significant natural features in the City. It holds out the promise of being an important part of a future open space system. Land developers and private landowners are encouraged to use the Open Space Plan to identify opportunities for coordinating private open space areas with the larger public open space system.

Public Trails

Trails are an integral part of the open space system, providing connections among and access to other open space areas. The City revised the Multi-use Trails Master Plan in 1988, and is continuously working to complete the planned system. Regional trails are planned and coordinated through the cooperative efforts of the involved jurisdictions, partially through the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments. As pointed out previously, of the approximately 159 miles of planned trails, over 50 miles had been completed by mid-Summer of 1996. See Appendix 2.

Private Trails

Several small, private trail systems exist in the city. These trails are owned and usually maintained by homeowner associations, and are intended primarily for the use of neighborhood residents. Examples include Village Seven's greenway and the trails at Cedar Heights and Briargate. Some of the Briargate trails are maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department and have public access, but most private trails are closed to the general public. Like private open space, private trails supplement the open space system, but are not considered part of it.

Conservation

Methods Used for Conserving Public Open Space-

The open space areas listed in the current inventory were acquired through a variety of methods, either singly or in combination. The 1,368- acre Garden of the Gods Park, for example, gained its current size and configuration through nearly thirty different land transactions that have taken place

over an eighty-year period. The park began with a 480-acre donation made to the City on behalf of the Perkins family in 1910. Since that time, about 55 acres have been donated, 370 acres have been purchased, and about four acres dedicated by developers. Several land trades have consolidated and supplemented the Park. While most City open space areas have been less incrementally formed, the majority have been assembled through multiple land transactions. It should be noted that public condemnation of private property for parks or open space purposes has never been used in Colorado Springs.

There are six main types of land transactions that have been used by the City to acquire public open space: donation, purchase, trade, transfer, lease and dedication.

Donation:

Donations are straightforward: a land owner gives the City land, sometimes with the stipulation that it be used as open space in perpetuity. Perhaps the best known donations are those made by the city's founder, General Palmer, who provided money or land for several area parks, including most of Palmer Park, about one-third of North Cheyenne Canyon, and Monument Valley Park in 1907. These lands, together with the Perkins family's gift of the initial part of Garden of the Gods Park in 1910, formed the basis of the City's open space inventory, and are still some of its more important holdings. Over the years, many other individuals, groups and corporations, have given open space to the City, making donations the largest single source of public open space. However, significant donations have plummeted since the late 1930s.

Purchase:

Colorado Springs has purchased over 1,500 acres of open space with funds obtained from general revenues, bonds and grants. The earliest open space purchase on record was of 640 acres in North Cheyenne Canyon, obtained in 1885 for just over \$5,000, or about \$8 an acre. Subsequent acquisitions have, of course, been more expensive, although some landowners have been willing to sell to the City at below market rates. Major purchases in the late 1970's and early 1980's included Pulpit Rock Open Space (192 acres), Austin Bluffs Park (76 acres), most of Ute Valley Park, and significant additions to the Garden of the Gods.

Lease:

Open space may be leased by the City from a property owner. In the current public open space inventory, no property is leased in this way. Although leases have been used in the past, they have the disadvantage of providing only temporary protection from future development.

Trade:

Some open space areas have been acquired through land trades between the City and another land owner. While little additional open space is usually gained by such a transaction, trading has been a valuable tool for consolidating and improving the quality of existing holdings.

Transfer:

The City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) own land for many different purposes, ranging from police station sites to reservoirs. In some instances, a parcel of land may cease to be useful for its intended purpose, but is suitable for park or open space needs. Under certain conditions, the land may be transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department. One notable instance of this was the transfer of 810 acres from CSU to create Bear Creek Canyon Park in 1983.

Dedication:

According to the City Code, when land is subdivided for residential development, a portion of that land must be dedicated to the Parks and Recreation Department for a future park site. If a development does not contain any land that is suitable for park needs, a fee can be paid to the Department instead. The amount of land to be dedicated, as well as the fees, are determined by a formula based on the number of dwelling units to be built. While the majority of dedicated land and fees are devoted to neighborhood parks, some open space areas have been dedicated through this process. The City may give a developer partial or full park land dedication credit for private open space if the private open space meets certain criteria. In practice, this credit has also been extended to include public open space as well. Additions to Austin Bluffs, Garden of the Gods and Palmer Parks were obtained through dedications. Those open spaces that have been protected through the granting of parkland dedication

credit have, in effect, been acquired as substitutes for all or part of developed neighborhood park site requirements in an area.

It is important to note that the City has no dedication requirements for public open space. Under the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, the City may only require dedication or payment of fees to provide for the following facilities: neighborhood parks, playgrounds, playfields and community parks. Any fees paid in lieu of parkland dedication cannot be expended for the acquisition of public open space.

Dedications, however, may occur in circumstances other than the filing of a subdivision plat. Banning Lewis Ranch, an undeveloped area spanning over 23,000 acres on the City's eastern edge, was annexed in 1988. As part of the annexation agreement negotiated between the City and the owner, a nearly 700-acre regional park site, Jimmy Camp Creek, was dedicated. This open space was dedicated in addition to the required land dedications for neighborhood and community parks which will take place as land is subdivided in the future. Jimmy Camp Creek Park alone accounts for nearly 65% of all open space obtained through dedication.

Methods Used for Conserving Private Open Space-

There are four main methods used to secure land as private open space:

- * plat a tract for specific use as open space;
- * apply a preservation easement;
- * apply a conservation easement; and
- * utilize private land trusts.

1. Private Open Space Tracts

A tract is officially defined in the Subdivision Ordinance as "a parcel of land which is created for purposes of common ownership and use by two or more property owners, an association, or government entity." A tract is created with the final plat of a subdivision. An open space tract would be shown on a final plat with the specific use (open space) spelled out, and ownership and maintenance responsibilities identified. Privately-held open space tracts are typically found in residential subdivisions. Access, both practically and legally, is usually restricted to certain property owners or association members.

2. Preservation Areas

Preservation areas are defined in both the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances as "that portion or area of a lot(s) which is set aside in the form of a restriction for the purpose of retaining land or water features in their natural, scenic or open state." Designated preservation areas are subject to restrictions against activities that could adversely affect drainage, flood control, erosion control, soil conservation, or the retention of land or water areas. Filling, grading, construction, removal of live vegetation or any other disturbance is prohibited. Like tracts, preservation areas are created at the time of the final plat of a lot. However unlike tracts, they are part of an individually owned platted lot and are not in common ownership. Preservation areas can be found on both residential and non-residential lots.

3. Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal document that contains permanent restrictions on the use or development of land, usually limiting further development. The conservation easement is typically granted to a land trust or governmental entity. Conservation easements may or may not allow public access and use. Although they are a valuable conservation tool, easements have not been widely used in Colorado Springs.

4. Land Trusts

Land trusts are private, non-profit groups established to administer conservation easements or otherwise arrange open space conservation. The William J. Palmer Parks Foundation Inc. (informally

known as the Palmer Foundation) is a local land trust that holds conservation easements on a number of properties in the city, including public open space areas purchased with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) funds. The Palmer Foundation has been instrumental in the preservation of approximately 2,400 acres within El Paso and Teller Counties. The Foundation also acts as the holder of conservation easements in public acquisitions made with GOCO grant funds, such as Sinton Pond and parts of the Pikes Peak Greenway.

Open Space in Approved Master Plans

Another source of open space consists of areas designated as future open spaces on approved master plans. Master plans are documents submitted by private landowners and approved by the City Planning Commission that depict the general land use and transportation patterns for large areas that are planned for future development. They represent the first step in the land development process. Master plans do not contain the precise location and size of land uses, but do indicate the general size and configuration of future open space areas. The future open space may be public or private, depending on the terms of approval of the master plan and subsequent development plans and subdivision plats.

Developers are required to designate land as open space in master plans according to very general review criteria pertaining to the preservation of significant natural features, view corridors, and buffers. Usually, master planned open space is determined by terrain restrictions such as steep slopes or natural drainage ways. Thus the amount, quality, and configuration of designated open space varies greatly among master plans. There are approximately forty approved master plans in the City that are not yet fully developed. Of these, half include some future open space areas. See Appendix 3.

Part 3: Planning the Future Open Space System

Primary & Supplemental Purposes of Open Space

The open space project team and Citizens Review Committee (CRC) developed several policies to guide the creation of the future open space system. These include a set of purposes that describe the various functions open space should fulfill in the community, a set of goals for the system as a whole, and a definition of the natural area types that should be included in the system. The policies were then used to analyze potential open space areas in and around the city. The result is the identification and evaluation of several top candidate open space areas. The candidate areas, when combined with the existing open space inventory and existing and proposed trails, form the major elements of a potential future system.

Primary Purposes of Open Space-

The primary purposes of open space are directly in keeping with the idea of using open space to promote the protection, enjoyment and appreciation of the natural environment. This includes not only traditional ideas of environmental preservation, but also allows for recreation in a natural setting, environmental education, and the protection of significant scenic features.

Protection of Environmental Features

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat encompasses everything animals need to live in an area, seasonally or year round, including movement corridors, water supply, food, and shelter. Open space may be used to protect habitat for species important to the region, including rare, threatened and endangered species.

Significant Vegetation

The Colorado Springs area contains many significant types of plant associations, including short and mid-grass prairie, pinyon-juniper and alpine meadow. Open space can serve to protect these and other types of native and non-invasive vegetation, as well as rare, threatened and endangered species.

Water Resources

Water resources include all types of water bodies, including natural or artificial wetlands, lakes, ponds and streams. Open space can be used to protect water resources by protecting the water bodies themselves and by preserving surrounding and nearby vegetation that filters pollutants and slows runoff and erosion.

Provision of Recreational and Educational Opportunities

Recreation

Open space can provide opportunities for certain types of recreation that are well-suited to a natural setting. Activities generally considered appropriate to open space areas include hiking, running, bicycling and equestrian sports that use unpaved trails. Specific open space areas may be suitable for rock climbing or for water sports.

Nature Observation and Environmental Education

By definition, open space is all or mostly in a natural state, which makes it ideal for nature observation and environmental education. These activities include bird watching, plant identification, or just quiet enjoyment of the outdoors. Open space areas also have great potential as outdoor classrooms for education programs designed to teach area residents about the natural environment.

Protection of Visual Resources

Visual Resources

Visual resources include distinctive and prominent features of the natural environment, including the mountain backdrop, rock outcroppings and significant landforms. Both the features themselves, as well as vantage points from which they can be viewed, can be conserved by open space.

Supplemental Purposes of Open Space-

Supplemental purposes are those that represent important community values that are not tied directly to the natural environment. They are functions that open space can serve in addition to, or in conjunction with, the primary purposes.

Protection of Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are those features of the landscape which contribute to the area's sense of history and place. Historical landscapes and archaeological remains representative of earlier stages of the City's existence, along with fossilized remnants of the region's pre-historic era, are considered cultural resources. Areas containing significant cultural resources may be protected by open space.

Protection from Environmental Hazards

Open space may be used to set aside areas characterized by wildfire danger, steep slopes, floodplains, unstable soils, and other environmental hazards as long as they serve one or more primary purposes and provide a demonstrable benefit to the open space system.

Urban Shaping and Buffering

Open space may be used to spatially define, identify, and separate developed areas, in order to provide relief from continuous development, to shape the form of the city in accord with its significant land forms and natural features, and to achieve more sustainable and environmentally responsible patterns of growth.

Agriculture

Agricultural activities such as ranching, grazing, farming and orchards represent important aspects of Colorado Springs' cultural heritage. Open space may be used to preserve these uses, as well as to provide opportunities for urban agriculture such as community gardens. Agricultural activities that maintain land in an open and scenic condition may be used to protect areas from more intensive development or as an interim use pending restoration to a more natural state.

Adjacency

Some existing open space areas may be enhanced by the addition of adjacent parcels. These parcels may not be necessarily significant by other criteria, but would contribute to the viability of existing areas by providing needed buffers, access or parking areas.

Why a System?

One of the purposes of this plan is to act as a guide for the community in identifying areas that warrant conservation. A key step in providing that guidance is to place individual open space areas in the context of the entire city. The current open space holdings in the city are referred to as an inventory because they are more a collection of fragmented, isolated natural areas, rather than a connected, interdependent open space system. By planning future open spaces as parts of a larger whole to be conserved over time, potential open space areas can be evaluated on the basis of how they contribute to the realization of the community's vision of a future system.

The defining characteristic of open space in Colorado Springs is the preservation of significant natural features and areas. Promoting the protection, enjoyment and appreciation of the natural environment will continue to be the focus of the future open space system. This position is supported not only by the established view of open space in Colorado Springs, but by the results of a recent community questionnaire as well. The questionnaire asked people to select the most important uses for open space from an extensive list. The responses were overwhelmingly in favor of uses that conserved natural features and trails.

System Goals-

1. Plan open space using the principles of environmental conservation, namely:

- * Conserve large, contiguous areas of native vegetation;
- * Protect rare landscape elements and significant natural features, and
- * Maintain connections between open space areas by identifying and protecting corridors for wildlife movement.

2. Conserve areas representative of Colorado Springs' main natural area types:

- * Grasslands
- * Bluffs and Mesas

* Foothills

* Stream Corridors/Riparian

3. Provide public access and recreational opportunities, particularly trail corridors within and between open space areas.

4. Pursue the conservation of areas that reflect community values for open space that may not be tied directly to the protection of natural areas, such as archaeological, paleontological, historic, and other cultural resources.

5. Identify candidate areas well in advance of development. This means taking a city-wide, long-term view of candidate open space areas.

6. Use all available financial and administrative resources in the conservation of open space areas. This refers to making the widest possible use of public and private resources and tools in building the system. These include public/private partnerships, the full array of conservation methods, regulatory approaches, leveraging funds, and volunteer and pro bono expertise.

Natural Area Types-

One of the goals of the open space system is to conserve representative sections of the City's four natural area types: grasslands, foothills, bluffs/mesas, and streams or riparian areas. Each natural area is a grouping of distinct environmental features such as plant communities, wildlife habitat, soil, geology and water. Natural areas also look different from one another, even to the most casual observer. It is the combination of all four natural area types that gives the region its unusually high degree of ecological diversity and unique character.

It is important that the future system reflect the importance of each natural area type. By balancing future open spaces among the various natural areas, the full range of the City's environmental resources will be represented in the system. The diagram following page 30 illustrates the general location of each natural area, and can serve as a context in selecting future candidates for open space. One way to classify natural areas is on the basis of vegetation. Variations in altitude, soils, slope, aspect, and moisture are apparent in the type of plants living in a given area. Vegetation also determines, to a great extent, the types of wildlife that can be supported. For this reason, the following descriptions of each natural area type concentrate on the types of plant communities occurring in each.

Grasslands

Also called prairies, grasslands are the dominant natural area type across Colorado's plains, including the eastern parts of Colorado Springs. Grasslands furnish habitat for pronghorn antelope, mule deer and prairie dogs. The presence of smaller mammals such as desert cottontails, black-tailed jackrabbits, pocket gophers and prairie dogs, attracts predators including eagles, hawks, falcons, foxes and coyotes. Abandoned prairie dog burrows serve as homes for reptiles, amphibians and burrowing owls. These areas are also attractive areas for agriculture and development; most of the remaining grasslands that have not been converted to other uses have been used for grazing.

As the name grasslands suggests, grasses and forbs are the predominant vegetative types. Most prairie communities are characterized by a mix of blue grama and buffalo-grass, but spots with more moisture support taller grasses, such as needle-and-thread, western wheatgrass, and big and little bluestem. Prickly-pear cactus may be plentiful in heavily grazed areas.

In addition to mixed areas with no dominant, definable grassland type, three distinct grassland communities exist in eastern Colorado Springs: short-grass prairie, mid-grass prairie, and tall-grass prairie. In general, sites with greater moisture support taller grasses. The long-term cattle grazing that has taken place over much of the city's grasslands has altered the original vegetation in favor of short-grasses and weeds. As a result, the taller grasses have become relatively scarce. There are a few instances of tall-grass prairie in Colorado Springs, particularly around the airport. The tall-grass

prairie is of state-wide importance, as there are few good examples of this remnant grassland remaining along the Front Range.

Foothills

The foothills in the western part of the city constitute a transition zone from the forested lands typical of higher elevations to the grasslands of the plains to the east. Various types of shrublands dominate the foothills, often mixed in with patches of forest or grasslands. The diversity of vegetation, slope, aspect, soils and altitude present in the foothills creates a rich mosaic of wildlife habitat and visual features. More mammal species live in eastern slope shrublands on rocky sites below 8,000 feet than in any other mountainous area in Colorado. Black bears, mule deer, bighorn sheep, peregrine falcons, Merriam's wild turkeys and Clark's nutcrackers are among the fauna that use the trees and shrubs of the foothills during at least part of the year. Many species are either restricted to or most abundant in this natural area.

Six distinct types of plant communities can be observed in the foothills area: Douglas Fir forest, Ponderosa Pine forest, Pinyon-Juniper woodland, Foothills grasslands, Mountain Shrub and Scrub Oak. It is often difficult to identify the dominant plant community in any given foothills area, as the vegetation is typically heavily mixed. In general, stands of Douglas Fir exist at the higher elevations, usually giving way to ponderosa pine at lower altitude.

Below elevations dominated by ponderosa pine, the pinyon-juniper woodlands, mountain shrub and scrub oak areas occur. Pinyon-juniper communities are characterized by the presence of pinyon pine, usually mixed with Utah juniper. Because junipers are more drought resistant than pinyon trees, some areas may be almost pure stands of junipers, particularly at lower elevations. The most dominant and conspicuous species of shrub is Gambel oak, which is important to mule deer, squirrels, chipmunks, wild turkeys and other wildlife that feed on acorns. Other common mountain shrubs include mountain mahogany, skunk brush, chokecherry and Wood's rose.

Foothills grasslands most often form the lowest band of foothills natural areas. They typically form a mosaic with open stands of ponderosa pine and mountain shrub lands. Unlike other grassland types, buffalo-grass is not usually present.

Bluffs and Mesas

Fingers of the foothills extend into central and northern Colorado Springs forming bluffs and mesas. Ecologically, this natural area type mimics the foothills. The most common vegetative communities are foothills grasslands, scrub oak and mountain shrub. At one time, the bluffs and foothills formed one continuous natural area. Over time, development, particularly the construction of I-25, has separated the two, leaving the bluffs and mesas as somewhat isolated natural areas. This isolation has given the bluffs and mesas greater importance as wildlife habitat than may otherwise have been the case, as animals other than birds have difficulty leaving the area. Wildlife in the bluffs is similar to that observed in the foothills, although species like black bears, mountain lions and bobcats that need extensive hunting grounds are much less frequent, if present at all. By virtue of their location in the midst of the urbanized area, the bluffs and mesas have also taken on increased social and visual significance, since they are accessible to a large number of people and provide scenic relief from nearby development.

Riparian

Riparian areas are found along natural drainageways, lakes ponds, reservoirs and wetlands. They are characteristically narrow bands of lush vegetation within much drier surroundings. According to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, riparian areas comprise less than 2% of the State, but support more than 70% of all vertebrate wildlife species found in Colorado. In El Paso County, 341 of the 489 documented vertebrate wildlife species are dependent on riparian habitat during all or a portion of their life cycle. In addition to supporting wildlife, riparian areas are important in filtering surface runoff before it enters waterways, stabilizing banks and shorelines, and reducing the impact of flooding by slowing the flow of water. In many areas of the city, development has pressed directly up to the edges of creeks, reducing them to narrow corridors between urban land uses.

The combination of water, cover and diversity of habitat in riparian areas provide the greatest variety of wildlife along the Front Range. Leopard frogs, chorus frogs, red-winged blackbirds, northern

flickers, great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, northern orioles, robins, beavers, muskrats, white-tailed deer, coyotes, red foxes, fox squirrels and raccoons are all frequently observed animals that depend on riparian areas for subsistence.

There are two main types of riparian vegetation: herbaceous/water and cottonwood/willow. The herbaceous/water category includes all non-woody vegetation communities that surround streams, ponds and areas of open water such as large reservoirs. Wetlands dominated by grasses, sedges and rushes that are important wildlife habitat can also be found in this category, as well as grass and wildflower communities that prefer moist but not saturated soils. Usually these riparian habitats occur within the floodplain of a stream or along lake shorelines. Riparian herbaceous/water communities occur throughout the intermittent and permanent stream corridors of Colorado Springs.

Cottonwood/willow woodlands occur in scattered stands along major drainages. Common vegetation includes plains cottonwood trees, usually accompanied by an understory of coyote willow.

Evaluation of Potential Open Space Areas-

The purposes, system goals, and natural area types were used by the project team and the CRC to identify and evaluate potential open space candidates. The evaluation was structured around a series of questions that were answered utilizing geographic information system (GIS) mapping and modeling. The initial analysis was based on two major questions.

Is the land vacant?

The starting point for identifying potential open space candidates is all vacant land in and near Colorado Springs. For the purposes of this study, vacant land over five acres was identified using the County Assessor's records, utility information and aerial photographs for 1994. Vacant lands in an agricultural use with minor accessory structures were also included. Any empty parcels that had already been platted were not considered vacant, as development may be imminent.

What significant natural features are present?

The use of open space to conserve natural features is the principle purpose of this plan. Significant natural features include wildlife habitat, native vegetation, streams and lakes, and highly visible areas that contribute to the City's scenic quality. In general, land with the highest value as potential open space will have several of these features. The table on the following page illustrates the process for evaluating natural features.

Use of GIS Mapping and Modeling

Geographic information system mapping and modeling were used as the main tools for analyzing the natural value of potential open space areas. Mapped environmental data from various sources, and often at different scales, were combined to create a composite model of areas with high natural value. When using these maps and the resulting model as a guide in open space conservation, there are three important points to keep in mind:

A. The maps show general patterns, not exact locations.

Hard lines on maps can create the false impression that they represent exact boundaries. This is not the case with the environmental mapping used in the plan. Only the general location of natural activities or occurrences are indicated, and all boundaries shown are relative.

B. "All models are wrong, but some models are useful".

The composite model is not an absolute predictor or determinant for decision-making. Rather, it is a

tool that, in combination with common sense and good judgment, can be used to enhance decisions for open space conservation and to communicate the basis for those decisions.

C. Onsite analysis and field verification are absolutely necessary.

When evaluating and prioritizing specific parcels of land for open space conservation, detailed site analysis and field verification must be conducted. These specific parcels will typically be located within the general areas identified in the plan as having high natural value. The usefulness of the plan is not that it depicts exactly what to preserve, but that it indicates where to look, what are the important questions to ask, and what are the important connections to make.

In general, the model asks : Where are the areas with the highest value for wildlife habitat, significant vegetation, water resources, and scenic quality? For more detailed background on the data sources used, see Appendix 4. A separate report on the modeling process, Geographic Information Systems Modeling for the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan, is available from City Planning on request.

Selecting the Candidate Areas-

Using the map of Composite Natural Areas and the system goals, the CRC and the project team identified eighteen candidate areas for open space conservation. The selection process incorporated three additional questions:

Is there potential for recreation?

Providing opportunities for outdoor recreation is one of the major reasons for setting aside land as open space. The recreational activities best suited to open space, running, hiking, bicycling, equestrian, natural observation, and environmental education, are all dependent on the presence of trails. The first question in regard to recreation potential, then, is whether or not a trail could be constructed on at least part of the candidate area without adversely affecting the natural features. Areas specified on the adopted Multi-use Trail Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, or the Pikes Peak Greenway Master Plan have obvious recreation potential. Another question is whether the site is suited to non-motorized water sports such as fishing, boating and swimming, or for other specialized activities, such as rock climbing. These recreational resources are scarce but highly valued by the community.

What natural area type does the parcel represent?

One of the goals for the future open space system is to create a balance among the various natural area types present in Colorado Springs. These are:

- * Grasslands
- * Stream Corridors/Riparian Areas (waterways and surrounding areas)
- * Foothills
- * Bluffs and Mesas

The goal is not to have an equal number of acres of each area type, but to conserve representative examples within a connected system.

What trails or open space resources could connect to the area?

The intent of this plan is to create a system consisting of large, open areas connected by trails or other corridors. Areas that would contribute toward this goal through enlarging or connecting planned or existing open space resources are considered strong candidates.

The maps on the following pages illustrate the results of the mapping, modeling, and candidate area selection. Candidate areas are very generally defined to encompass areas with high natural and scenic value without regard to individual ownership. Any conservation of land in these areas would be accomplished only through agreements with willing landowners or through the public review process

for proposed development.

Descriptions of the Candidate Areas-

The candidate areas are arranged by natural area type, and are not prioritized. The advisory body that is eventually charged by the City Council to make recommendations about open space conservation must investigate each area further to arrive at final evaluations and priorities.

Grassland Areas

A. Airport/Big Johnson

Directly south of the airport is an expansive stand of relatively rare tall-grass prairie. The area consists of rolling grasslands with sweeping views of the Front Range and the surrounding high plains. It is highly visible from Drennan Road, the main route to the airport, and links directly into the Big Johnson Reservoir, an area which has been identified as a significant conservation resource in El Paso County. The combined resource could serve as an outdoor recreation area and open space buffer between Colorado Springs and Fountain.

B. Briargate

This area is a transition zone. It features ponderosa pine and scrub oak feathering into the prairie from the north, and forest grasslands rising to the edge of the Black Forest from the south. It also contains a forming area for two natural drainages which combine as a tributary to Cottonwood Creek. The dominant vegetation is forest grasslands mixed with ponderosa pine forest and riparian vegetation. Portions of the site are significant wildlife habitats. This candidate area is in one of the major undeveloped sections of the 8,700-acre Briargate master plan. It is situated at the northeastern edge of Colorado Springs, bordered by Old Ranch and Black Forest Roads. The area could serve as an open space buffer between the Black Forest to the north and future urban development to the south and west.

C. East Fork of Sand Creek

The east fork of Sand Creek cuts across the northern portion of Banning Lewis Ranch, an undeveloped 23,000-acre master plan. Significant stands of cottonwoods and willows exist along much of the creek, and tall-grass prairie and forest grasslands cover the surrounding area. Most of the site is significant wildlife habitat.

D. Lower Jimmy Camp Creek

This area follows Jimmy Camp Creek as it meanders through a grassland bowl framed by eroded cliffs and distant bluffs. The lower section of the creek serves as significant wildlife habitat due to its mix of tall-grass prairie and riparian vegetation. A planned trail will follow the creek from the Rock Island Trail south to the city limits.

E. Jimmy Camp Creek Park Area

The central portion of Banning Lewis Ranch contains Jimmy Camp Creek Park, a nearly 700-acre regional park site that is not yet open for public use. While the park site captures many significant natural features, the surrounding area is also environmentally and visually important. The area is highly visible from U.S. Highway 24, a gateway for travelers from eastern Colorado into Colorado Springs. The vegetation is a mix of riparian, mid-grass prairie and extensive ponderosa pine forest. The property is moderately significant wildlife habitat. It also serves as the juncture for the planned extension of the Rock Island Trail and the planned Jimmy Camp Creek Trail. Any additional land conserved as open space would serve to enhance the regional park site.

Foothill Areas

F. Hogbacks

This area is a geologic extension of the Garden of the Gods to the south. Due to its foothills location, its prominent rock formations, and seasonal variations in its vegetative cover, it has high scenic value. The majority of this area lies outside of the city, between Section 16 and Manitou Springs. It is very

visible to motorists on U.S. Highway 24, the main route between Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak, Teller County, and the western slope. Part of the site was once used as a landfill, but has since been re-vegetated with the same mountain shrub that covers the rest of the property.

G. J.L Ranch

J.L. Ranch is an undeveloped master plan of over 1,600 acres on the extreme southwestern edge of Colorado Springs. This area exhibits a rich mosaic of upland grassland, scrub oak, and ponderosa pine sweeping up to the base of granite cliffs at the south end of Cheyenne Mountain. The property borders NORAD and Fort Carson. Highway 115 forms the eastern edge of the site, making it a highly visible gateway to motorists traveling from Canon City. J.L. Ranch has the highest natural feature rating of any vacant land in the city, due to its visibility, important wildlife habitat, and sensitive riparian and foothills vegetation. A proposed county regional park would border the southeast part of the property, and a planned county trail would connect from the south.

H. Mountain Shadows-Peregrine

Mountain Shadows and Peregrine are two partially developed master planned areas on the city's west side. This candidate area stretches along the foothills on the city's northwest edge bordering Pike National Forest. This area is highly visible from most of the northwest side, as well as from I-25. The vegetation covering both properties is a combination of scrub oak, ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, which is particularly appealing to a variety of wildlife including black bears and mule deer. Close to half of the nearly 1,000 acres in the Peregrine master plan is designated as private open space that is not open to the general public.

I. Myron Stratton

The undeveloped Myron Stratton property encompasses nearly 400 acres master planned under the name Broadmoor Skyway. The southwestern portion of the site is contiguous to North Cheyenne Canyon. A planned trail through Myron Stratton would connect Bear Creek Park and North Cheyenne Canyon. Several trails actually exist already and are maintained by a local volunteer trails group. The property is highly visible from Cresta Road and surrounding neighborhoods. The vegetation is mixed mountain scrub, scrub oak and ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forest. The Colorado Division of Wildlife lists the entire site as wildlife habitat that is highly sensitive to development.

Riparian Areas

J. Cottonwood Creek

Cottonwood Creek stretches across the north central section of the city, joining with Monument Creek just south of Woodmen Road. The Multi-use Trails Plan calls for a trail along the creek that would connect with the Skyline Trail, Sand Creek Trail and Pikes Peak Greenway. Much of the creek flows through fairly dense development, but stretches of cottonwoods, willows and other riparian vegetation remain in many sections, particularly those toward the eastern city limits. It presents an opportunity for a major extension to the city's future greenway system.

K. Northgate

The Northgate master plan area is cross cut by three riparian features: Smith Creek, Monument Branch, and Black Squirrel Creek. Each of these form important wildlife habitats and corridors. The La Foret Trail, a planned joint City-County venture, will extend from the Air Force Academy portion of the New Santa Fe Trail to the Black Forest in the east. The trail will border Black Squirrel Creek and other tributaries of Monument Creek. The area contains important wildlife habitat for pronghorn antelope and other species, as well as a mix of grasslands.

L. Kettle Creek

A portion of Kettle Creek carves a tree-lined gorge through the Northgate and Briargate areas, east of the Air Force Academy. This area is mostly undeveloped, and its unusual mix of tall-grass prairie, ponderosa pine forest and riparian vegetation is largely intact. The partially completed Skyline Trail is slated to run along this portion of Kettle Creek, connecting with the county's section of the La Foret Trail.

M. Pikes Peak Greenway

The Pikes Peak Greenway is a linear park along Monument and Fountain Creeks that will eventually

run the length of the City, a distance of about 14 miles. The Greenway is over three quarters finished, and recent grants from Great Outdoors Colorado and the El Pomar Foundation will help secure completion in the near future. The Greenway will connect with the county's New Santa Fe and Fountain Creek Trails, forming a continuous link from the Douglas County line to Pueblo County. Nearly every east-west trail in the city connects or will connect with the Greenway. The entire corridor is significant wildlife habitat, formed in part by the cottonwood and willow stands that line the creek. It represents the spine of a future greenway system.

N. Spring Creek

Spring Creek is a partially developed master planned area of about 475 acres. It forms an oasis of mature riparian vegetation situated on the south side of U.S. Highway 24, just east of the Pikes Peak Greenway. The location is highly visible and is one of the few extensive vacant parcels in south central Colorado Springs. Open space conserved in this area could serve as an enhancement to the Pikes Peak Greenway and provide visual relief from the intensely developed surroundings.

O. Sand Creek

Sand Creek crosses much of the east side of Colorado Springs, running from Black Forest into Fountain Creek north of Fort Carson. A planned fourteen mile trail will run along the length of the creek in the City, connecting with the Pikes Peak Greenway and the Rock Island Trail. Sand Creek flows through a variety of areas, some of which are densely developed, and others that contain virtually undisturbed forest grasslands. The Sand Creek Trail could provide a valuable greenway resource in an area with few existing open space areas.

Bluffs and Mesa Areas

P. Hill Master Plan

East of the Garden of the Gods is a stretch of undeveloped land that forms a semi-circle around the Hill master plan. At one end is Blair Bridge Open Space, and at the other is Mesa Valley Open Space. The area is visually distinct, as well as moderately important wildlife habitat. Its value is primarily in its high visual significance and its connections to existing open space on the mesa.

Q. Houck Estate

The Houck Estate is a master planned area of over 700 acres near the center of Colorado Springs. Two existing open space areas border the property; Pulpit Rock to the northwest and Austin Bluffs to the south. Near-by residents have long used the Houck Estate as open space, and several informal trails exist. The property is characterized by visually striking geologic formations, mesas and valleys, and is highly visible from surrounding areas as well as from the Interstate. The ponderosa pines and shrubs that cover much of the site are generally attractive to wildlife, but, due to the isolated location habitation is limited. Plans for development appear imminent at this time.

R. Rockrimmon

East of Ute Valley Park is an undeveloped area characterized by visually prominent rock outcroppings. Portions of the site are covered with a mixture of forest, shrub land and riparian vegetation. The Multi-use Trails Plan calls for the Ute Valley trail to run through the property, connecting Ute Valley Park and the Pikes Peak Greenway. This area has high visual value and represents an opportunity to extend open space in the bluffs/mesas natural area westward from Ute Valley Park.

S. Future Candidate Areas

The candidate areas identified in the plan are not exhaustive or exclusive. As the open space system begins to take shape, and as more environmental information becomes available, additional areas may be identified through a periodic review process for the plan. In the future, the advisory body that is eventually charged by City Council to make recommendations regarding the conservation of open space may add areas that meet the criteria of the evaluation and selection process used in the plan.

Future Open Space System

The map on the preceding page depicts the potential future open space system for the city. It is composed of the city's existing open space areas, open spaces designated in approved master plans, existing and proposed city and county trails, high scoring composite natural areas, and the candidate areas. It represents an idealized diagram of the future open space system as envisioned in the plan. The map should not be interpreted to mean that all the land areas shown will be conserved, whether by public acquisition or by other means, in the future. It does, however, show in broad outline the major elements and connections of the future system. It is intended to be used as a general guide and a benchmark in evaluating specific sites and setting priorities for conservation.

Evaluating Specific Sites and Setting Priorities-

The Open Space Plan does not set priorities for conserving specific sites. That task will fall to the board appointed by City Council to implement the plan through an open space conservation program. Within the context established by the plan, choices will have to be made on which specific sites to pursue. The following questions may be used as the initial set of criteria for evaluating specific sites and setting priorities.

Is the property available from a willing land owner? Is the land owner in a position to offer favorable terms or conditions for conservation?

The conservation of a parcel of land as open space is dependent on the disposition and motivation of the land owner. Cases where the land owner is interested in conservation will generally result in a more affordable project. To make the most effective use of limited open space resources, primary consideration should be given to projects which can be achieved at a reasonable cost.

Would the area fulfill any of the supplemental purposes of open space?

Supplemental purposes of open space are those that represent community values not directly related to natural features or recreation. They include:

- * Protection of cultural resources
- * Preservation of agricultural lands
- * Urban shaping and buffering
- * Setting aside areas with environmental hazards
- * Supporting and expanding existing open space areas

What degree of public access could be provided to the parcel?

In general, open space areas should be available for public use, to the extent that the integrity of natural features is not compromised. In some cases, the presence of rare or endangered species or particularly fragile environments may preclude public use of a site. Sensitive siting of trail corridors and seasonal closures of some areas may be necessary in order to protect wildlife habitats. The system should reflect a balance between the goal of public use and enjoyment of open space and the desire to protect sensitive environments.

Of the areas that can be open to public use, those candidates where adequate access can be arranged should be favored. Access can be either from a street or trail connection. If users must drive to an area, adequate parking should be secured.

Would the parcel provide open space to an area that is currently underserved?

The present open space inventory is fairly widely distributed, but there is a definite lack of open space in the eastern and southeastern sectors of Colorado Springs. Potential open space located in these or other underserved areas should be seriously considered as additions to the system.

Is there community support for conserving the parcel as open space?

Parcels that have demonstrable community support for conservation as open space should be strongly considered, particularly where such support may lead to opportunities for public-private partnerships for conservation and management. Community partnerships are essential for obtaining many types of funding, particularly grants.

Does the parcel present any unusual maintenance or development costs?

Unusual costs may stem from the presence of environmental contaminants, or the need for drainage or other improvements. Parcels with such characteristics should be evaluated in light of the additional costs clean-up or other improvements.

Regional Coordination-

In 1996 and 1997 open space planning within El Paso County made unprecedented progress. In addition to the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan, El Paso County completed its first Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, the City of Manitou Springs prepared its first Open Space Plan, and the United States Air Force Academy completed an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. In combination, these plans present a unique opportunity to coordinate open space conservation on a regional basis.

The map on the following page represents an initial step in that coordination. It depicts a potential city/county open space system based on the two plans. High priority lands for conservation from the county plan are identified by letter and discussed below in relation to major elements in the city's plan. Related areas from both the Air Force Academy's plan and the Manitou Springs plan are referenced in the course of the discussion but not shown on the map.

A. Black Squirrel and Monument Branch

These areas are a continuation of the city's Northgate candidate area. Their conservation would protect scenic quality, riparian habitats, and wildlife movement corridors. They are directly linked to the wildlife movement corridors and riparian habitat along Monument Creek as identified in the Air Force Academy's plan.

B. Black Forest

This shows only the southern part of an area that represents a major portion of the remnant Black Forest landscape in El Paso County.

C. Corral Bluffs

In places, these eroded bluffs drop nearly 400 feet, exposing the rock strata. Protection of this area would maintain the visual quality of an important landmark and distinctive landform. It also has proposed trail linkages to the nearby Jimmy Camp Creek Park area.

D. Lower Jimmy Camp Creek

This riparian habitat provides an important link via a proposed trail between the city's Lower Jimmy Camp Creek area to the north and Fountain Creek to the south.

E. South Fountain Creek Floodplain/Uplands

This area contains mature riparian vegetation and provides very important wildlife habitat. The segment mapped here is only one in a chain that extends along Fountain Creek from the city's Spring Creek candidate area to the southern county line.

F. Little Fountain Creek

This area includes the lower reaches of Little Fountain Creek and contains important wildlife habitat,

riparian vegetation and wetlands, as well as upland grasslands. It lies just to the west of the Colorado Springs State Wildlife Area, which contains approximately 3,700 acres leased by the Colorado Division of Wildlife from Colorado Springs Utilities for hunting and habitat protection.

G. Big Johnson Reservoir

Big Johnson Reservoir overlaps with the city's Airport candidate area. It could provide an important water-based recreational opportunity.

H. State Highway 115/Mountain Front

This area includes a potential county regional park to the east of Highway 115, with direct linkages to the city's J.L. Ranch candidate area. Nearly all the land west of the highway along the mountain front is highly scenic.

I. Cheyenne Mountain

This area encompasses most of the west slope of Cheyenne Mountain. It is crossed by the Cripple Creek Road and contains important wildlife habitat.

J., K., and L. Manitou Springs

These three areas surrounding Manitou Springs have critical scenic value for the Front Range mountain backdrop and provide important wildlife habitat. Area J. overlaps the city's Hogbacks candidate area and is identified in the Manitou Springs Open Space Plan as an important buffer and an area to be monitored.

Part 4: Implementation of the Plan

Building the Open Space System & Implementation Strategies

Building the Open Space System

The implementation the Open Space Plan is the long-term process of building an open space system for the city. It rests on a set of six general strategies and eleven specific recommendations for action. The strategies are broad principles or approaches for guiding the implementation process. The recommendations are concrete actions that need to be taken to make the plan a reality.

Implementation Strategies

Motivating the Private Landowner

It is an obvious but often overlooked fact that successful open space conservation depends on the objectives and motivations of private landowners. This means that the cornerstone of implementing the plan is to maximize the voluntary opportunities and options available for landowners to incorporate conservation as an important consideration in the use and disposition of their land. These may include a desire to leave all or part of their land in a natural state and still realize some cash value, tax advantages of charitable contributions, estate planning considerations, capturing the value of natural amenities in the development process, philanthropic objectives, or the desire to leave a legacy to the community. These motivations can be mixed and should be matched to the appropriate conservation tools.

Maximizing the Choice of Conservation Methods

Effective open space conservation depends on having a broad mix of public, private, and nonprofit conservation methods that can be creatively combined. A wide choice of methods that can be tailored to the specific circumstances of a landowner significantly boosts the potential for success. In some cases several methods may be applied at once to conserve a single parcel.

Organizing Community Support for Open Space Conservation

Long term responsibility for implementing the plan must rest with the wider community, not just the

local government. The formation of a private, non-profit organization whose express purpose is to advocate and monitor the realization of a viable open space system would enhance the plan's chances of success.

Establishing a Public Open Space Conservation Program

As the owner and manager of the City's public open spaces, the City government needs to provide a focus for devoting scarce public and private resources to open space conservation. These resources are both financial and administrative. In order to maximize the choice of conservation methods available to private landowners and to forge effective partnerships, a conservation program administered by the City is necessary.

Maximizing the Use of Existing Public and Private Resources

In accordance with the fiscal limits on City government, it is also important that the City maximize its use of existing staff resources in support of an open space conservation program. Similarly, the City needs to leverage other public and private resources to the maximum extent possible and to form partnerships with local and national nonprofit land trusts.

Coordinating Open Space Conservation with Other Local Governments and Agencies

The coordination that has been established through the open space planning process with El Paso County, the City of Manitou Springs, the United States Air Force Academy, Fort Carson, and other state and federal agencies needs to be continued during the implementation of the plan. This coordination recognizes open space as a regional resource that cuts across jurisdictional boundaries.

Specific Recommendations for Action

The following eleven recommendations for action outline the steps that need to be taken by City government, community groups, private landowners, nonprofit land trusts, developers, and individual citizens working together to effectively implement the plan.

1. Recommendation: Establish an Open Space Conservation Program.

Lead Responsibility: Administration by Parks and Recreation.

Discussion: In addition to providing a more focused approach to the conservation of open space in Colorado Springs, a publicly funded program is necessary to ensure the protection of relatively large parcels with high dollar costs. It can act as a vehicle to secure matching funds for Federal and State grants. It also allows the City to take a proactive approach to open space conservation by structuring a multi-year acquisition program. Finally, it creates new market opportunities for landowners who are seeking to conserve their land and still capture a cash return. Full implementation of this recommendation is directly dependent on the following one.

2. Recommendation: Approve a multi-year, dedicated funding source to support an Open Space Conservation Program.

Lead Responsibility: Approval by the registered voters of the City of Colorado Springs and/or City Council. Administration by Parks and Recreation.

Discussion: Without some form of ongoing public funding to support open space conservation, the ability of the community to fully implement the plan will be limited. The option utilized by most Colorado communities is to increase the local sales tax by a modest amount. Sale tax revenues are typically used to leverage other funds such as bond issues, certificates of participation, and state grants from lottery funds.

3. Recommendation: In partnership with the Palmer Foundation, the local nonprofit land trust for open space conservation, the City should pursue the increased use of conservation easements as an important addition to the methods it currently employs to protect open space.

Lead Responsibility: Administration by Parks and Recreation.

Discussion: The city currently uses donation, purchases, trades, transfers, dedications, grants, and land use regulation to conserve open space. More emphasis on the use of conservation easements will broaden the options for private landowners and allow the City to tailor more creative approaches to conserving specific areas.

4. Recommendation: Establish and maintain an Open Space Geographic Information System as a public information resource.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning with Parks and Recreation.

Discussion: This takes the information developed for the Plan a step further by creating an ongoing central information source and reference for open space resources in the community. It would provide a database that could be used to educate property owners about the resources on their land and the voluntary options that are available for conserving those resources. The database could also be used by the Palmer Foundation in pursuing voluntary conservation options with property owners, by developers in preparing master plans, development plans, and subdivision plats, and by planners in applying land development policies and regulations pertaining to open space conservation.

5. Recommendation: Organize a Private, Nonprofit Open Space Coalition.

Lead Responsibility: Member organizations represented on the Open Space Plan Citizens Review Committee.

Discussion: The long-term implementation of the plan requires a private community group to monitor its progress on an ongoing basis. A private, nonprofit group is best suited to accomplish this. Such a group can also provide valuable volunteer expertise in furthering open space conservation. A similar group of trails advocates, the Trails Coalition, is already active in the community. The initial impetus for organizing an Open Space Coalition should come from the member organizations represented on the Citizens Review Committee for the Plan. This would be a private, non-profit organization only.

6. Recommendation: Expand the use of the existing Planned Unit Development zone district, and supplement it with design guidelines, to provide an option for laying out and building subdivisions that:

- * are directed toward conserving open space through the development process;
- * achieve a balanced pattern of conservation areas and development both within sites and between sites;
- * contribute to the creation of an interconnected network of open space from development to development;
- * form "building blocks" in the community-wide system of open space; and
- * allow developers to build densities equal to those achievable under more conventional zone districts.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning for the development of design guidelines and code revisions.

Discussion: The development process can be used to effectively conserve onsite resources and maintain connectivity in wildlife habitat and riparian areas, while remaining "density neutral". This option is implicit in the existing PUD zone district. Clearer, explicit direction in how it can be applied will make it a more viable choice for landowners, developers, and builders.

7. Recommendation: Use the Open Space Plan as the standard of reference for evaluating the configuration of open space designations in master plans submitted for amendment.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning.

Discussion: This is consistent with recent revisions to the master plans section of the Zoning Code that require master plan amendments to be reviewed for consistency with approved City-wide plans, including the Open Space Plan.

8. Recommendation: As part of annexation agreements, require the dedication of open space resources that demonstrate high value to the open space system.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning for development of criteria for evaluating open space resources; Parks and Recreation for negotiating requirements.

Discussion: Specific criteria for evaluating areas as additions to the City's open space system and the phasing of the dedication would need to be developed and applied in the master plan accompanying the annexation agreement.. Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Park is an example of the implementation of this recommendation.

9. Recommendation: Pursue the updating of Drainage Basin Planning Studies to support the conservation of creek/riparian candidate areas as natural drainageways.

Lead Responsibility: Stormwater Management.

Discussion: The approach of managing stormwater through more natural creek corridors/drainageways is a method for enhancing potential greenways and multi-use corridors. When applied to the candidate creek/riparian areas identified in the plan, this approach may require additional land on each side of the stream channel. It would also include improvements to achieve necessary controls for storm runoff and velocity, while addressing other important values and multi use issues, such as open space/trail/recreational corridors, utilities, wetlands, trees/vegetation, wildlife, water quality, and maintenance.

10. Recommendation: Pursue the development of a Creek Protection Overlay Zone.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning.

Discussion: The intent of this proposed overlay would be to establish clear performance criteria, prohibited practices, and land use relationships for existing and new development along riparian areas.

11. Recommendation: Work with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) in order to identify lands owned by CSU that have natural value for use as open space and pursue the protection of those lands and their public use subject to specific conditions and criteria.

Lead Responsibility: City Planning and Parks and Recreation for identification and staffing requests to CSU; CSU for evaluating requests and recommending approval or disapproval; Parks and Recreation for use and main tenance if the property is designated open space.

Discussion: CSU-owned lands that would warrant consideration as open space must have a demonstrable natural significance or value based on the purposes and selection criteria set forth in the plan. In addition, because CSU is a non tax supported enterprise and has a fiduciary responsibility to it's rate-payers, the use of CSU-owned land as open space must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All of the following factors must be considered in evaluating CSU-owned land for open space designation:

1. The designation must meet a valid public purpose and produce a public benefit. (Article XI, Colo. Constitution)

2. The designation must support a valid utility purpose and produce a utility related benefit. (Colo. Springs City Charter)

3. The designation is not expected to have an adverse effect on CSU's operations or finances.

4. Future use of the property for utility- related purposes must be retained.

5. Designation of CSU-owned land as open space may be appropriate only on a portion of a larger parcel and should not constitute an irrevocable use.

6. Maintenance of CSU-owned land placed in open space status will be the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department or some entity other than CSU.

7. Designation of CSU-owned land as open space must be approved by City Council.

Afterword

On April 1, 1997, the voters of Colorado Springs approved a one-tenth-of-one-cent increase in the city sales tax to support the acquisition and construction of trails, parks and open space. The tax is projected to generate between five and six million dollars per year over the next 12 years, at which time it must be reconsidered by the electorate. A minimum of 60% of the tax proceeds must be spent on open space acquisition and stewardship.

Thus, within a week of City Council approval of this plan, city voters took steps to implement its first two major recommendations. Actions to implement other recommendations of the plan are also in process, including the organization of an Open Space Coalition, the development of criteria for conserving open space in subdivisions, master plans and annexations, and the establishment of an open space geographic information system to support conservation decisions. Major milestones in the implementation the plan are highlighted on the following page. The energy and initiative displayed by the community in addressing open space issues and implementing the Open Space Plan are yet another indication of the high value that the citizens of Colorado Springs place on the conservation of open space in their city.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Existing Open Space

Appendix 1: Existing Open Space in the Parks and Recreation Inventory by Management Classification

Regional Parks	Acres
Austin Bluffs	76.12
Beer Creek Canyon	810.33
Garden of the Gods	1,367.95
Jimmy Camp Creek	693.85
North Cheyenne Canyon	1320.00
Palmer Park	725.86
Ute Valley	344.12
Total	5,338.23
Community Parks	Acres
Monument Valley	145.41
Quail Lake	112.34
Rampart Park	77.77
Sondermann	97.85
Total	433.37
Open Space	Acres

Beacon Hill	3.98
Blair Ridge	37.62
Bluffs	2.73
Broadview Ranch	12.09
Cheyenne Meadows	25.83
Douglas Creek	22.51
Eighth Street	11.84
High Plains	3.25
Homestead	11.73
Iron Horse	3.61
Mesa Valley	73.44
Mountain Shadows	44.03
Neal Ranch	5.89
Pike View Reservoir	11.66
Pring Ranch	6.31
Promontory	3.53
Pulpit Rock	193.26
Silent Rain	2.18
Sunset Mesa	39.42
Woodmen Valley	29.70
Total	544.61
Other City Open Space	Acres
Bluestem Park	1.37
Briargate Tract	82.62
Frank Waters Park	1.00
High Street Park	1.60
Homestead Park	5.27
Mid Shooks Run Park	1.95
Mountain Shadows Park	6.49
North Shooks Run Park	11.34
Oak Valley Ranch Park	4.71
Old Farm Park	26.52
Peregrine Open Space	3.50
Rudy Park	16.81
Sinton Pond	9.83
South Shooks Run Park	10.50
Villa Loma Park	8.36
Total	191.87

Summary of City-owned Open Space

Management Category	Acres
Regional Parks	5,338.23
Community Parks	433.37
Open Spce	544.61
Other	191.87
Total	6,508.08

El Paso County Open Space	Acres
Bear Creek Park	595
Black Forest Park (leased from US Forest Service)	240
Fountain Creek Park	360
Fox Run Park	410
Homestead Ranch	450
Section 16 (leased from State Land Board)	640
Total	2,695

Appendix 2- City Trails Inventory

Appendix 2: City Trails Inventory

Trail Name	Approx Length (Miles)	Estimated Percent Completed (1996)
Bear Creek (City Portion)	0.25	0
Chamberlain	3	10%
Cottonwood Creek	9.25	10%

Foothills (City Portion)	9	50%
Pikes Peak Greenway Trail	14	90%
Midland	5.5	2%
Greencrest	0.65	100%
Homestead Ridge	11	50%
Jimmy Camp Creek	13.5	0
La Foret	5	5%
Meas Springs Greenway	3	0
Mesa Valley	4	70%
Palmer Mesa	2	100%
Pulpit Rock	4.25	0
Rock Island	13	25%
Rockrimmon	5	60%
Sand Creek	14.25	1%
Shooks Run	4.25	90%
Sinton	3	50%
Skyline	12.25	25%
Star Ranch	3.5	0
Stetson	2.5	0
Templeton Gap	6.5	100%
Ute Valley	3.25	40%
Wilson Ranch	3	60%
Woodmen	4.5	0
System Total	159.4	35%

Appendix 3- Major Master-Planned Open Spaces

Appendix 3: Major Master-Planned Open Spaces 1996

Master Plan	Planned Open Space Acres
Banning Lewis Ranch	1,428
Briargate	394
Broadmoor-Skyway (Myron Stratton)	51
Colorado Springs Ranch	28
High Chaparral	8
Houck Estate, Tract A	293

J.L. Ranch	702
Mountain Shadows	165
Neal Ranch	18
Northgate	160
Norwood	75
Oak Valley Ranch	20
Old Farm Height	5
Peregrine	272
Pinecliff	3
Spring Creek	42
Stetson Hills	109
Stetson Ridge	18
Woodmen Oaks	14
Woodmen Pointe	13
Total	3,818

Appendix 4- Data Sources

A variety of data sources were used to map and model natural features and areas in the geographic information system analysis for the Open Space Plan. The following is a brief description of the source data used in each map.

1. Base Map Features

The base map features for all maps included major thoroughfares, city boundaries, and military installations. They were taken from the Colorado Springs Utilities' (CSU's) Facilities Information Management System, commonly known as FIMS. FIMS consists of over twenty separate layers of digital data for the city. FIMS planimetric mapping has a high degree of spatial accuracy (plus or minus 2 1/2 feet horizontal). It was originally generated from aerial photography at a scale of 1" = 600'. For the vacant eastern area of the city known as the Banning Lewis Ranch, FIMS data were not available. Base map features for that area were taken from digital USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps referred to as Digital Line Graphs (DLG's). USGS data layers are at a scale of 1:24,000.

2. Existing City Parklands Inventory

Data for the park land inventory were compiled from City Parks and Recreation Department records, staff review, and the FIMS cadastral layer.

3. Existing Public Open Space and Trails Inventory

In addition to the sources used for the park lands inventory, data for this map were digitized from approved master plan files and from information provided by El Paso County Parks.

4. Natural Area Framework Diagram

This diagram was derived from ecosystem mapping based on the following sources. A) The Colorado Division of Wildlife's GAP analysis vegetation layer, which was derived from an analysis of 1989 Landsat satellite imagery. B) The Colorado Springs Urban Growth Area Inventory of Significant Natural Features (1990), which was digitized from USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps at a scale of 1:24,000.

C) The City Forestry Tree Cover Type map digitized from USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps at a scale of 1:24,000.

5. Existing Vacant Land

This map was derived from vacant lands mapping by CSU's Water Resources Department on a FIMS base, El Paso County Assessor's parcel data, and El Paso County aerial photography for 1994. These data sources were compiled and edited by the City's Comprehensive Planning section and GIS and Records Support section into a single data layer.

6. Water Resources

Water resources were compiled from the FIMS hydrography layer and the USGS DLG hydrology layer. Major streams and lakes, ponds, and reservoirs were given a 200' buffer; minor streams a 100' buffer; and ditches and canals a 50' buffer. Woody vegetation within buffer areas was taken from the City Forestry Tree Cover Type map.

7. Significant Wildlife Habitat

The data presented in this map were derived from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) Wildlife Resource Information System (WRIS) and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) Level One Inventory of Biological Special Interest Areas. That inventory was conducted by CNHP under contract to El Paso County in the Spring and Summer of 1996. CDOW's WRIS data reflect the geographic distribution of 30 wildlife species mapped in El Paso County by biologists and district wildlife managers on USGS 1:50,000 scale county series maps. This data set was used to create a GIS wildlife composite map, which ranks habitat areas based on the potential impact from development and the status of the species present, including their rarity, sensitivity, and economic importance. The CNHP data were derived from a review by biologists of secondary sources and infrared aerial photography, in order to identify preliminary conservation planning areas. These areas are sites with known occurrences of rare, threatened, or sensitive species, or with significant intact habitat values. The sites were mapped on USGS 1:24,000 7.5 minute quadrangle maps.

8. Significant Vegetation

This map was derived from the CNHP Level One Inventory of Biological Special Interest Areas and a review and reselection of the areas by consultant staff ecologists at ERO Resources Corporation.

9. Visual Significance

Source data for determining visual significance were the USGS Digital Elevation Model (DEM) for the available 7.5 minute quadrangle map areas surrounding the city and the Colorado Springs Urban Growth Area Inventory of Significant Natural Features. For the northernmost section of the city, where USGS DEM data were not available, FIMS topographic data were used. Data from these sources were combined in a GIS analysis of relative visibility and significance.

10. Composite Natural Areas

This map combined data from the following maps: Existing Vacant Land, Water Resources, Significant Wildlife Habitat, Significant Vegetation, and Visual Significance.

Appendix 5- Related Plans and Studies

City of Colorado Springs

Geographic Information Systems Modeling for the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan (1997)

The Springs Community Action Plan (1996)

The Pikes Peak Greenway Master Plan (1994)

Colorado Springs Urban Growth Area Inventory of Significant Features (1990)

The Midland/Fountain Creek Parkway Corridor Plan (1989)

The Multi-Use Trails Master Plan Update (1988)

Master Plans:

Banning-Lewis Ranch

Neal Ranch

Briargate

Northgate

Broadmoor-Skyway

Peregrine

Hill Property

Rockrimmon

Houck Estate A (University Park)

Spring Creek

J.L. Ranch

Springs Ranch

Mountain Shadows

Stetson Hills

Stetson Ridge

Other Jurisdictions

El Paso County Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan (1997)

U.S. Air Force Academy Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (1997)

Manitou Springs Open Space Plan (1997)

Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study (1997)

Approvals and Endorsements

Approvals of the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan:

City Planning Commission - Unanimous Approval - February 6, 1997

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board - Unanimous Approval - February 13, 1997

City Council - Unanimous Approval - March 25, 1997

Organizational Endorsements of the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan:

Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau

Council of Neighborhood Organizations

Economic Development Corporation

Greater Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce

Housing and Building Association

Palmer Foundation

Pikes Peak Area Trails Coalition

Pikes Peak Group of the Sierra Club

Springs Area Beautiful Association

Open Space Plan Summary

The Need for a Plan

The city has grown from fewer than 50,000 residents in 1950, to an estimated 323,300 in 1995. During the 1990's, many vacant areas with wide visibility and high scenic and natural value became subject to development pressures. As a result, the need to conserve open space emerged as a prominent community concern.

What is Open Space?

In Colorado Springs, open space has been officially defined according to the following characteristics:

- Open space areas are in a natural or primarily natural state;
- Open space areas contain significant natural, aesthetic, or cultural features that warrant protection;
- Open space is permanently protected, not a temporary designation for vacant lands.

The Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Open Space Plan is to provide the community with a guide for the future conservation of open space areas in and around the city. It is intended to be used as an information resource, a policy document, a vision of the future open space system, and as a road map for realizing that system.

How the Plan Was Created

The Plan was created through the combined efforts of a sixteen-member Citizens Review Committee (CRC), a project team made up of planners and geographic information system specialists, and a technical team of representatives from various City departments, other local governments, and State and Federal agencies. Financial support was provided in part by a grant from the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund.

The plan has combined community input and citizen participation with extensive information gathering and technical analysis. The major steps in the process were as follows:

- Inventory of existing open space areas
- Review of existing resources and methods used to conserve open space
- Identification of key issues
- Formulation of open space purposes
- Analysis of potential open space lands
- Proposal for a city-wide open space system
- Recommendations on ways to conserve, maintain, fund and manage the system.

Existing Open Space

Of the City's parkland inventory of more than 8,495 acres, over 6,500 acres, or three-fourths, can be counted as open space. Public open space areas fall into one of four park management categories: regional parks, community parks, open space, and trails. Some neighborhood parks which form critical links in linear trail corridors are also included in the public open space inventory.

There are six main types of land transactions that have been used to conserve public open space: donation, purchase, trade, transfer, lease and dedication.

Private open space is considered as an asset that supplements the public open space inventory, but is not a part of it, since it typically does not allow public access or use.

Trails are an integral part of the open space system, providing connections among and access to other open space areas. Over 50 miles out of a total of 159 miles of planned city trails have been completed.

The Future Open Space System

By planning future open spaces as parts of a larger whole to be conserved over time, potential open space areas can be evaluated on the basis of how well they fit into the community's vision of a preferred system. That preferred system is defined by the purposes or functions that open space should serve in the community, a set of system goals, the city's main natural area types, and an evaluation of potential open space candidates.

Primary Purposes of Open Space

- Protection of Environmental Features
- Provision of Recreational and Educational Opportunities
- Protection of Visual Resources

Supplemental Purposes of Open Space

- Protection of Cultural Resources
- Protection from Environmental Hazards
- Urban Shaping and Buffering
- Agriculture
- Supporting Adjacent Open Space Resources

System Goals

- Plan open space using the principles of environmental conservation for large natural areas connected by linear corridors.
- Conserve areas representative of Colorado Springs' main natural area types.

- Provide public access and recreational opportunities, particularly trail corridors within and between open space areas.
- Pursue the conservation of areas that reflect community values for open space that may not be tied directly to the protection of natural areas, such as archaeological, paleontological, historic, and other cultural resources.
- Identify high priority areas well in advance of development.
- Use all available financial and administrative resources in the conservation of public open space areas.

Natural Area Types

One of the goals for the future open space system is to create a balance among the various natural area types present in Colorado Springs. These natural areas are:

- Grasslands
- Stream Corridors/Riparian Areas (waterways and surrounding areas)
- Foothills
- Bluffs and Mesas

Evaluation of Potential Open Space Areas

The purposes and system goals provide a basis for identifying and evaluating potential open space candidates. The following series of questions illustrates the steps in the selection process for future open space areas.

- Is the land vacant?
- What significant natural features are present?
- Is there potential for recreation?
- What natural area does the parcel represent?
- What trails or open space resources could connect to the parcel?
- Is the property available from a willing landowner?
- Is the land owner in a position to offer favorable terms or conditions for conservation?
- Would the area fulfill any of the supplemental purposes of open space?
- What degree of public access could be provided to the parcel?
- Would the parcel provide open space to an area that is currently underserved?
- Is there community support for conserving the parcel as open space?
- Does the parcel present any unusual maintenance or development costs?

Potential Open Space Candidates

Based on the first five evaluation questions (vacant land, significant natural features, recreation potential, natural area, and connections) eighteen potential open space candidates, representing each of the natural areas, were identified.

Potential Open Space System

The potential open space system is composed of the city's existing open space areas, open spaces designated in approved master plans, existing and proposed city and county trails, and the candidate areas. It represents an idealized diagram of the future open space system as envisioned in the plan.

An Implementation Strategy

Implementation of the plan consists of two parts: general strategies and specific recommendations for action.

The implementation strategies are:

- Motivating the Private Landowner
- Maximizing the Choice of Conservation Methods
- Organizing Community Support for Open Space Conservation
- Establishing a Public Open Space Conservation Program
- Maximizing the Use of Existing Public and Private Resources
- Coordinating Open Space Conservation with Other Local Governments and Agencies

The specific recommendations for action are:

1. Establish a Public Program for Open Space Conservation.
2. Approve a multi-year, dedicated funding source to support an Open Space Conservation Program.
3. Pursue, in partnership with the Palmer Foundation, the increased use of conservation easements as an important addition to the methods the City currently employs to protect open space.
4. Establish and maintain an Open Space Geographic Information System as a public information resource.
5. Organize a private nonprofit Open Space Coalition.
6. Expand the use of the existing Planned Unit Development zone district, and supplement it with design guidelines, to provide an option for laying out and building subdivisions that are directed toward conserving open space through the development process.
7. Use the Open Space Plan as the standard of reference for evaluating the configuration of open space designations in master plans submitted for amendment.
8. Require, as part of annexation agreements, the dedication of open space resources that demonstrate high value to the open space system.
9. Pursue the updating of Drainage Basin Planning Studies to support the conservation of creek/riparian candidate areas as natural drainageways.
10. Pursue the development of a Creek Protection Overlay Zone.
11. Work with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) in order to identify lands owned by CSU that have natural value for use as open space, and pursue the protection of those lands and their public use subject to specific conditions and criteria.

Acknowledgements

CIVIC LEADERSHIP

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Helen Beulke - Convention & Visitors Bureau
Jeanne Matthews - Council of Neighborhood Organizations
Mike Murphy - Economic Development Corporation
David Sellon II - Housing & Building Association
Walter Lawson - Joint City-County Open Space Funding Task Force
Don Downs - Palmer Foundation
Theresa Dent - Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Lee Milner - Pikes Peak Area Trails Coalition
Mark Skelton - Pikes Peak Association of Realtors
John Stansfield - Sierra Club
Steve Harris - Springs Area Beautiful Association

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Stacy Schubloom - City of Colorado Springs, Public Communications
Bruce Thorson - City of Colorado Springs, Stormwater & Subdivision
Lisa Bigelow - City of Colorado Springs, Budget and Financial Analysis
Gary Rapp - City of Colorado Springs, Development Services
Larry Manning - City of Manitou Springs Planning Department
Bruce Goforth - Colorado Division of Wildlife
R.C. Smith, Jr. - Colorado Springs Fire Department
Terry Putman - Colorado Springs Park & Recreation Department
Sue Johnson - El Paso County Parks
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Lee Cook - Colorado Springs Utilities

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CONSULTANT PROJECT SUPPORT:

ERO Resources Corp. - Environmental/GIS Analysis
Kimley-Horn & Associates - Meeting Facilitation
Logicon Geodynamics - Satellite Imagery and Vegetation Classification
Kimmel Graphics - Photography
AdWerks - Design and Layout

Obtaining a Copy of the Open Space Plan

Final printed copies of the Colorado Springs Open Space Plan are now available.

The plan is not being sold. It is free of charge to the public. However, those who receive a copy of the plan are being asked to make a voluntary charitable donation to support open space conservation in our community. A suggested donation amount is \$10, but please give whatever you think is appropriate. There are two ways to obtain a plan.

In Person:

Copies of the plan may be picked up during normal business hours at two locations in Colorado Springs: the City Parks and Recreation Department, 1401 Recreation Way, or at the City Planning Offices in the City Administration Building, 30 S. Nevada Avenue, Suite 301. Your voluntary donation should be in the form of a check or money order made out to "City of Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Department". Also please note "Open Space Donation" on your check.

Via Mail:

Write to the Trails and Open Space Coalition, 1426 N. Hancock, Suite 4 North, Colorado Springs, CO 80903, and include your name and mailing address. Your voluntary donation should be in the form of a check or money order (not cash) made out to "Trails and Open Space Coalition of the Pikes Peak Region". Please note "Open Space Donation" on your check. A copy of the plan will be mailed to you.

Questions? Call Rob O'Connor at (719)578-6030